



Derbyshire Mammal Group News

Summer
2013

(Issue 22)

Forthcoming Events:

Saturday 20 and Sunday 21 July
Small Mammal Survey at Calke Abbey
Contact: Jennie Lloyd jennielloyd@nationaltrust.co.uk

Sunday 15 September
Autumn Social
Contact: Liz Lonsdale

Saturday 2 or Sunday 3 November
Harvest Mouse Live Trapping Session
Contact: Steve Lonsdale

Website:

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Marking Ten Years of DMG

Our first group activity after the formation of the Derbyshire Mammal Group in January 2003 was a search for Harvest Mouse nests at Erewash Meadows. In recognition of that first event, we organised a similar one to mark DMG's 10th anniversary.

On Sunday 13 January 2013 a group of DMG members assembled at the High Peak junction car park. We were lucky to have chosen a dry afternoon even if the ground was still wet after many weeks of rain. As we numbered about a dozen people, we split into two groups to survey two areas for Harvest Mouse nests.



One group headed for the DWT Derwentside reserve which is between the Cromford Canal and the River Derwent. The group searched for about an hour and found many fresh signs of Field Vole but no Harvest Mouse nests. A dipper was heard singing, it had positioned itself in front of a large wall which ensured its song was well projected.

The second group headed up the hill to Lea Woods and recorded Grey Squirrel, Fox, Field Vole, Mole and Bank Vole, but

also no Harvest Mouse nests.

Both groups adjourned to the Kings Arms at Crich, where were joined by other members of DMG for a tea and a slice of 10th anniversary cake.



Liz Lonsdale

Sir David Attenborough has a copy of 'The Mammals of Derbyshire'

Like many naturalists, I grew up watching David Attenborough's nature documentaries on the television, and this was one of the reasons why I became fascinated in the natural world and keen to work within it when I could. I have had the good fortune to meet him on a couple of occasions and have found myself tongue tied both times!

Just before the early May bank holiday, I casually asked Karim Vahed, a colleague from the University of Derby, what he would be doing over the bank holiday weekend. "Having an audience with Sir David Attenborough", he casually replied! Karim was helping out on some filming which Sir David was narrating for a documentary on Sky and would have the opportunity to meet him in the green room afterwards. I quickly ran to my car and drew out a copy of 'The Mammals of Derbyshire' and gave it to Karim. I asked Karim to give the book to Sir David with my compliments and asked him to say that he was a true inspiration to me. I also know that Sir David grew up in Leicestershire and probably knows Derbyshire fairly well so thought it might interest him. According to Karim he was utterly delighted by the gift and wished to pass on his thanks and congratulations. I for one will now be scanning the bookshelves behind Sir David when he is interviewed on telly!



Debbie Alston

Editor's Note: We have now sold some 220 copies of the book. It will continue to be sold at many DWT and other local natural history events over the coming months for £10.

If you wish to have a copy posted to you, please send a cheque (payable to 'Derbyshire Mammal Group') for £12.50 (includes P&P) and your full postal address to me at:

Steve Lonsdale
31 Caroline Close
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The Mammal Society Conference 20-21 April 2013

There were some very good talks this year, a few stood out. Emma Sheehy won the student prize for her continuing study on squirrels and pine martens in central and eastern Ireland. A detailed distribution survey showed the grey squirrel (GS) in decline and the red squirrel (RS) on the increase where the population of pine martens (PM) was increasing. GS showed in PM scats but not RS; so is it stress or direct killing which is causing the change? The study will follow the fortunes of all three species in another area that PMs are colonising now.

In a WW2 fortification system in west Poland 40,000 bats hibernate along the 30km of tunnels. Martens are increasingly hunting the bats hundreds of metres from the entrances in total darkness.

Xavier Lambin spoke on the use of volunteers to turn back the tide of American mink over a vast area of Scotland. Starting in headwaters the project has cleared mink from 10,570km² and is expanding to 20,000km². The major partners are fisheries staff but other local volunteers took a major responsibility for raft monitoring and mink trapping.

A number of talks and posters had used Waterford Institute of Technology to analyse DNA in hair or droppings, still not cheap but it is giving lots of useful information. There is a new survey financed by the EU to study the fauna of Wales.

The conference in 2014 is in Birmingham.

Shirley Cross

Interesting Notice

While walking in Scotland we came across this slightly worrying notice.

Steve Lonsdale



What a State to Be In

While writing a quiz on a theme of badgers I noticed that Wisconsin is nicknamed the Badger State and wondered if they had a large population of the magnificent mustelid. They may have, but that is not the origin of the nickname. In the 1800's Wisconsin had a large lead mining industry. Instead of building shacks the miners dug tunnels into the hillside and lived in them during the winter. The holes with their spoil heaps reminded people of badger setts.

Several other states have nicknames involving mammals, some as a second or third nickname. Florida is of course the Sunshine State but it is also the Manatee State. That wonderful creature was designated state marine mammal in 1975 and they do live in the warm bays and rivers of Florida.

Michigan is called the Wolverine State but it is unclear if the giant weasel ever lived there. The nickname stems from the 1835 Toledo War between Michigan and Ohio over the disputed Toledo Strip. Men from Ohio referred to Michiganians as wolverines as they had a reputation for being as ornery and cantankerous as the animal. The University of Michigan adopted the wolverine as its school mascot.

The University of Arkansas athletics teams adopted as their emblem the razorback, which is a thin long-legged wild hog resident in the state. Though not official, Arkansas is often referred to as the Razorback State. It was referred to as the Bear state by early settlers who found the territory home to many bears.

South Dakota adopted the coyote as its state animal in 1949 and is known as the Coyote State. Oregon designated the beaver as the official state animal in 1969 and it appears on the reverse of the state flag. The nickname the Beaver State stems from the early 19th century when fur hats were fashionable and Oregon's streams were an important source of beaver.

Back in 1855 Minnesota was known as the Beaver State but the animal was not sufficiently numerous to characterize the territory. The abundant animal in the area was the gopher but it was deemed too insignificant and useless to be the emblem of what they hoped would be a great and prominent state. However in 1857 an attempt was made to amend the constitution to allow the state to issue bonds to raise \$5,000,000 to build railways. Opponents published a cartoon showing a train pulled by nine gophers so Minnesota became known as the Gopher State.

John Bland

Mountain Hares the Easy Way

Liz and I spent much of May and June in Shetland. On the way up we had spent some time with Jo Bissell and Ian Wildbur in Glenshee (Cairngorm), where we had distant views of Mountain Hares from the ski centre car park on a very cold, windy, and snowy May day.

The mainland of Shetland has a reasonable population of Mountain Hares, so we thought it our duty to look them up.

A day walking over Kirk Ward (where they are supposedly fairly common), had resulted in us having a brief glimpse of one as it ran away from us, and three together some 100m away. They appeared much more flighty than the Peak District population, I assume because there are far fewer folk about in Shetland, certainly on the hills.

We had parked our motorhome on a moorland road beside a loch, and decided to spend the night there in the hope of seeing some other wildlife. As we sat down in the 'van to eat some dinner, a Hare ambled casually down the road, only to be frightened off by a rare passing car. Ten minutes or so later, another one appeared further down the road. They were still in transition from their white coats, so have a somewhat mottled appearance.

I thought it worth setting a camera trap that night, but only caught the backside of a Hare running away.

A few days later we walked much of the same route and saw many more Mountain Hares, now mostly in their summer pelage and beginning their mating rituals. On driving down the road later, we came upon a Hare following the scent of another, crossing the road several times, and even passing underneath our 'van when we stopped beside it.

Steve Lonsdale



Winged Mammals

When compiling a larger article for Observations, the journal of DNHS, I noticed that several mammal groups include within their terminology and species names an element derived from the Greek word pteron, which means wing. Bats are in the order Chiroptera with chiro meaning hand. There are microchiroptera which are echo-locating bats, and megachiroptera which are fruit bats otherwise known as Pteropodidae which means wing foot.

Flying lemurs are in the order Dermoptera, which means skin-wing and the "wings" really are the skin between the front and hind legs.

The scientific name Megaptera novaeangliae translates as New England big wing so I was surprised to find that it belongs to the humpbacked whale and relates to the fact that its front flippers can be about a third of its body length. The fin whale is Balaenoptera physalus, with balaen from the Latin for whale and physalus relating to bladder.

John Bland

From The Times Letter's Page, 4 January 2013

Sir,

During 2012 our 2-year-old black and white moggy brought us 122 small rodents (mice, bank voles, shrews), five rats, two bats and one grey squirrel.

Jennifer Dyer

Evesham, Worcs

The next edition of this newsletter is planned for Autumn 2013. Please forward any articles (on any mammal or DMG related subject) to Steve Lonsdale (Lons57@gmail.com).

Opinions expressed in this Newsletter are those of the individual authors, and may not represent the views of Derbyshire Mammal Group.

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